

Bettman (B.)

Civil Service Reform in State Institutions—  
Reorganization of the Medical Staff.

---

BY BOERNE BETTMAN, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AND CLINICAL OTOTOLOGY IN THE COLLEGE  
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS; PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY IN  
THE POST-GRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL; PRESIDENT OF THE  
ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES. CHICAGO.

---

REPRINTED FROM THE  
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,  
JUNE 29, 1895.



CHICAGO:  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION PRESS.  
1895.



# Civil Service Reform in State Institutions— Reorganization of the Medical Staff.

---

BY BOERNE BETTMAN, M.D.

PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY AND CLINICAL OTOTOLOGY IN THE COLLEGE  
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS; PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY IN  
THE POST-GRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL; PRESIDENT OF THE  
ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES. CHICAGO.

---

REPRINTED FROM THE  
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION,  
JUNE 29, 1895.

---

CHICAGO:  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION PRESS.  
1895.







## CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN STATE INSTITUTIONS—REORGANIZATION OF THE MEDICAL STAFF.

---

All measures toward reform in the treatment of the insane will prove an utter failure until the manner of appointing the medical staff is radically changed.

The superintendent and head of the institution must possess not only the requisite medical skill to fit him for the care and supervision of the patients intrusted to him, but he must also be endowed with executive abilities to maintain a business-like organization and to exact well-disciplined service from a large *personnel*. Burdened as he is by multitudinous duties, he naturally is obliged to delegate the treatment to the medical assistants. To them is intrusted the diagnosis of the mental complaint and its subsequent treatment. Upon them rest great responsibilities.

Medical assistants are ordinarily appointed through political or other influences. The superintendent is often not consulted in the matter, but is forced to submit to the dictates of others, whose only concern it is to obtain a job for some influential friend. Persons absolutely unfit, both by education and character, are thus thrust upon the institution, to the detriment of its insane inmates.

The number of physicians in our State asylums is inadequate; one for every four or five hundred patients. It is commonly acknowledged that one medical man should take care of no more than two hundred. Routine and careless treatment is thus avoided. The individuality of each case can be more readily studied. The now over-burdened

physician has but little time at his disposal for further improvement and recreation.

The isolated position of the asylums is another source of danger to the medical mind. Far distant from medical centers, cut off from associations with scientific men, deprived in this matter of the stimulus necessary to further improvement and original research, his ardor is either allowed to lie dormant or absolutely to die out for want of encouragement.

A laboratory well equipped exists in but one of our State asylums. Its value can not be over-estimated. It is a necessary adjunct. The practical results obtained in medicine are the outcome of the applications of scientific research and investigations. The latest improvements in surgery were only possible after the untiring labors of a Pasteur and Koch. The cure for diphtheria and hydrophobia depended upon the cultivation of bacteriology. Practitioners have neither the time nor the special qualifications to devote to strictly scientific pursuits. A specialist is necessary. A pathologist well trained and endowed with the proper zeal is needed for this work. His presence will also have a stimulative effect on the medical staff. If ambitious, he will imbue others with such a spirit for earnest and conscientious work that enthusiasm will be awakened. No individual can perform labor creditably unless he is devoted to his vocation. This is especially true in the calling of a physician. Constant and untiring research is an especial feature of his life. Science is ever making such rapid strides that to keep abreast of the times requires uninterrupted study.

To remain at a standstill means stagnation, deterioration. The introduction of staff meetings, for the purposes of consultation and discussion of medical themes and analysis of cases, will also call into life, taste for more thorough examinations of and conscientious devotion to the patients. These various reasons induced the State Board of Charities to issue a circular letter to the trustees of the four State



asylums requesting them, in order to improve upon the present methods, to appoint for each hospital a pathologist and a number of internes.

General hospitals the world over, have for years given recent graduates of medicine an opportunity to get a practical knowledge of their profession by employing them as assistants to the medical staff. Residing as they do in the hospital, and being called upon to perform certain services to the sick, under the supervision of the physician in charge, they obtain ample opportunities of acquiring useful knowledge and of profiting by the experience of their older and better informed superiors. The patients, on the other hand, have constantly at hand well educated assistants who are intelligently carrying out whatever orders may be given by the attending surgeons. This system of internes is doubly beneficial. Again, a certain amount of routine clerical work, as writing up the history of the patients, keeping daily record of their condition, etc., is performed by the interne, and relieves the attending physician of useless and unimportant labor, giving him time for more important work and self-improvement.

The appointment of internes must be absolutely free from prejudice and preferment of all kinds. The ablest only are worthy of these positions, for they alone are capable of profiting by the advantages allotted to them. They only possess the qualifications which will insure earnest effort and arouse a desire for progress. These competitive examinations should be free to all senior medical students of medical schools in the State of Illinois and to all Illinois practitioners of not more than five years' standing. Those senior students who succeed in obtaining sufficiently high marks to become internes should only then be accepted as such, after having received their doctor degree from their respective colleges. The closing of the college year varies in different institutions. To induce a sufficiently large number of students to compete, before returning to their homes, the exam-

inations should be held before May, and the successful candidates be assigned to their duties a few months later, after the final college examinations have taken place. All efforts should be made to place the examinations on a strictly impartial footing. The internes should receive beside their board and lodgings, a small monthly salary. They should be expected to serve at least one year, and be permitted to fill vacancies occurring in the staff of assistants. This system, if rigidly enforced, will be one step toward the introduction of a system of civil service reform in the medical corps of our institutions, which can only be associated with the highest benefit to all parties concerned. It will secure for the State a perfect medical service, and for the ambitious student untold opportunities for acquiring scientific and practical attainments.

A year ago the State Board of Charities sent a circular letter embodying the above views to the trustees of the four State lunatic asylums, and requested also a conference of the superintendents and the President of the State Board. At this meeting, the subject was thoroughly discussed and the result was the appointment of a board of examiners to conduct a competitive examination on a truly impartial basis. This board consisted of the following gentlemen, who were to prepare questions in their respective branches:

Dr. R. Dewey—Mental Diseases.

Dr. J. H. Etheridge—Gynecology.

Dr. Adolph Meyer—Anatomy and Physiology of the Nervous System.

Dr. Louis McArthur—Surgery.

Dr. Hugh Patrick—Nervous Diseases.

Dr. William E. Quine—Medicine.

This board appointed at its first meeting,

Dr. Boerne Bettman—President.

Dr. Hugh Patrick—Secretary.

The board prepared the following circular letter, a copy of which was sent to every medical college in



the State in good standing with the State Board of Health:

CHICAGO, April 5, 1895.

Notice is hereby given that a competitive examination will be held at Cook County Hospital, April 15, 1895, from 9 to 4 o'clock, for the appointment of internes to serve for a term of one year in the State Hospitals of the Insane, to be appointed as follows:

Northern Illinois Hospital for Insane, three internes (Elgin).

Eastern Illinois Hospital for Insane, four internes (Kankakee).

Central Illinois Hospital for Insane, three internes (Jacksonville).

Southern Hospital for Insane, two internes (Anna).

All senior students of, and all practitioners graduated within five years, from medical colleges recognized by the Illinois State Board of Health shall be eligible for this examination.

Candidates shall be examined in the following branches, viz.: practice of medicine, surgery, gynecology, mental diseases, nervous diseases, anatomy and physiology of the nervous system.

Each interne before entering upon his duties shall have complied with the legal requirements governing the practice of medicine in the State of Illinois.

Beside board and lodging, internes shall receive a monetary compensation not to exceed \$20 per month.

Applicants will oblige the Board by immediately sending their names to Dr. Hugh T. Patrick, 34 Washington Street, Chicago.

By order of the Board of Examiners.

BOERNE BETTMAN, M.D., President,  
HUGH T. PATRICK, M.D., Secretary.

Owing to unfortunate obstacles placed in the way of the Examining Board, the above announcement was not made until a late date, less than a week before the date of examination. Notwithstanding the short preparatory notice, nineteen applicants reported to the Secretary. Seven of these withdrew at the last moment, partly on account of a rumor which crept into the newspapers that internes were to be utilized as nurses. Six of the twelve aspirants obtained an average of 75 per cent. or more. One of these succeeded in obtaining a position in the Cook County Hospital. The remaining five drew lots,

which resulted in two being assigned to Kankakee, one to Elgin, one to Jacksonville and one to Anna.

The seventh and eighth highest in rank having obtained an average of 70 per cent. were appointed first and second alternates. The examination was absolutely fair; the identity of the applicants was lost, by withholding from their papers, names and any sign or symbol which might disclose them. A card bearing the name and given number of each candidate was placed in a sealed envelope, which was only opened after the papers were examined and the winning number had been decided upon. This examination marks an epoch in the history of State medicine. Although the City of Chicago has but recently adopted at the polls, by an overwhelming majority, civil service reform, to the medical fraternity belongs the credit of having first conceived the plan and carried it into execution. The fundamental principle of all good government should be, "to the worthy belong the deserts," in contra-distinction to the war cry of political parties, "to the victor belongs the spoils."

As our superintendents are medical men, they naturally will do all in their power to protect from harm the seed which has been planted, so it may sprout and develop into a sturdy plant, which will bear rich and bountiful fruit.





